

## COMMA RULES

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- F** Use commas to separate items in a series, but use semicolons if the items are independent clauses.  
I went to the fair, came home, and ate supper.  
I studied; Susan did not study; and Victor did not know about the test.  
I like to dance, swim, and sleep.
- G** Use commas to separate adjectives preceding a noun if "and" can be used between the adjectives because they relate and if they can be reversed in order.  
big red apple sad, depressed students old gray boat old, gray man
- H** Use comma before coordinate conjunction (and, but, or, nor, for, yet) joining two independent clauses.  
I like to swim, but I hate to ski.
- I 1** Use commas around adjective clauses that are nonessential (begin with relative pronouns (who, whom, whose, which, that), have subjects and verbs, and modify nouns or pronouns. Nonessential if do not tell "which one?")  
I like a boy who knows what he wants. (essential)  
I like Johnathan, who knows what he wants. (nonessential)  
The boy whom I like is Carl. (essential)
- I 2** Use commas around nonintroductory nonessential participial phrases (verbs used as adjectives, usually with "ing" or "ed" ending, modify nouns or pronouns.)  
May, coming into the house, fell and broke her leg. (nonessential)  
The girl coming up the walk is my sister. (essential)
- J 1** Use comma after introductory word that has no grammatical relationship to the rest of the sentence and does not show strong feeling.  
Yes, you are my friend. Oh, yes, I think you are clever.  
Oh, you are a real pal.
- J 2** Use comma after introductory prepositional phrase of four words or two phrases.  
During the trip down the river, I felt ill.  
Into the house on the corner came the young man (exception before verb)  
On Saturday I will visit your house.
- J 3** Use comma after introductory participial phrase (the grammar item is the same as **I 2**, only at the beginning of the sentence).  
Coming into the room, Mary fell and broke her leg.  
Finishing his work, Mark felt relief.  
Do not punctuate gerund subject—Finishing his work made John feel good.
- J 4** Use comma after introductory adverb clause (introduced by subordinate conjunction, has subject and verb, modifies verb).  
If you are sick, you will be excused from the assignment.  
Because he was not finished, I became worried.
- K 1** Use commas around appositives or appositive phrases that are nonessential (noun or pronoun that renames the noun or pronoun it follows). Essential if tells "which one?"  
May, my first cousin, is a great kidder. (nonessential)  
My first cousin M. J. Jones is funny, (essential if have more than one cousin)  
The movie *STAR WARS* is exciting. (essential)
- K 2** Use commas around name used in direct address (name of person to whom one is speaking in a sentence).  
Karen, you are late. Are you, Karen, late? Are you late, Karen?